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People and cars are a lot alike; each usually works well when new, but they tend to need more attention and maintenance with age. You take your car in for regular oil changes and other scheduled maintenance. As a result, your car continues to be dependable, and you eliminate major repairs in the future. This preventive maintenance extends the life of your car, significantly reducing the cost of car ownership. Are you following this same preventive approach with your body, the one machine that must last you a lifetime?

You need to plan for a healthy future with your own maintenance schedule. First, you need a daily routine that supports healthy living. This includes eating a balanced diet, getting regular exercise, managing stress, and finding time for recreation. Second, you need to be aware of health risks for your age and gender. For example, breast and uterine cancer for women, and prostate cancer for men require personal monitoring. Finally, you need to work with your doctor, or other health care provider, to screen for early development of health problems.

You need to review your personal maintenance schedule when:

- You pass 40 years of age
- You change doctors
- You have not seen your doctor in the past year
- You know that part of your life is out of balance
- You don't consciously include healthy living as a part of your life planning

Keep the following guidelines in mind – they'll help you keep your body in top condition.

- Plan your diet to include multiple meals that provide a wide variety of foods.
- Monitor your weight and make early adjustments in serving size and selection if you notice weight gain.
- Include enough physical activity in each day to burn an extra 300 calories (equivalent to walking briskly for 3 miles).
  - Allow yourself 15 or more minutes each day of guiet or "down" time to relax.
  - Get regular comprehensive physical examinations.
  - Discuss with your physician the needed periodic screenings for your age and gender.
- Follow guidelines from your medical provider for management of chronic conditions and treatment of acute conditions.
- Know your body well enough to detect any change in physical appearance or body secretions, and if it lasts for a few weeks, see your physician.

## An Ounce of Prevention Does Equal a Pound of Cure

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